

**The Hope that is in YOU:
May 10, 2026**

One of the fun things... **[1 Midwest]**
About going on vacation...
Especially... when you have to drive...
To see your family...
In a whole bunch of different places...
In the great states of Iowa and Wisconsin...

The fun thing is to rent a car.
Especially if it's a car...
That you have never driven before...
It's a new experience...
A grand adventure.

So at the rental counter...
The guy says to me...
You know what we have for you today...
A brand new Ford Bronco...
With all the bells and whistles...
And he rattled off all the desirable features...
Of that specific vehicle...

And when he finally...
Took a breath and finished speaking...
I said... is that included in the price...
That I reserved online?

He said... uh no.
But it's ONLY an extra \$25 per day.
I said... no thank you...
We'll stick with what we reserved.

He said... ok here are the keys...
For the very less impressive... Honda CRV.

Which turned out to be a really nice car.
And it did something...
That I thought was really funny.

Every time I started the engine...
It would play these beeps... **[2 Beeps]**
Which inspired me look at Janet...
And sing...

Some say love... it is a river...
That drowns... the tender reed.

She of course...
Was immediately smitten...
By my singing ability.
Not quite the truth.

She kind of thought I was a dork.

But those are the notes...
At the beginning of the song... The Rose...
Sung by Better Midler... back in 1979.

BTW... that chime is an invasive ear worm.
Every time I started the engine... after that... **[2 Beeps]**
Janet would sing...
Some say love... etc... etc...

So anyway... **[3 Parker Snow]**
The snow came this week.
About 7 inches...
Both in Parker and in Castle Rock...

Which is really good.
Because we desperately need...
The water to quench our dry land...
To give our plants and trees and lawns...
A long overdue drink.

However.
With the snow came...
The colder temperatures...
And it's kind of strange...
We had summer in winter... 80 degrees...
And winter in spring... below 32...

So now...
I'm worried about the seeds...
That Janet planted this year.
The hard freeze... you know...
Is the enemy of people who plant.

.
And yes... I know...
The seeds were buried..
Deep within the ground.
And the ground was warm...

But is it enough?...
To protect the life in the seed.
To protect the promise of growth...

Is it enough to still see...
The fulfillment of blossom and bloom.

What I'm asking you... is...
Is there hope?

So back to Bette Midler.
The end of the song... The Rose...
Speaks literally... directly to this situation...

And it goes like this...

[VIDEO - The Rose Ending] [4 Snow Plant]

See. That song is really about hope.
About how even when life is hard.
The road is long.
We don't understand.
The pain or sorrow of life.

That underneath... all of that...
There is still a seed of hope...
There is hope that underlies...
Everything we experience.

Because we are People of Hope.

But not hope that every situation...
Is going to end... like a Disney or a Hallmark movie.
Because life doesn't always work that way.

Instead we hope against hope.
We hope in all circumstances.

We hope in the darkness...
Because we know there is light.

We hope when there is evil...
Because we know that God is good..

We even hope in the face of death...
Because we know that Jesus is alive.

We have hope that is real and gritty and honest...
And sometimes hard.

So that's why... **[5 Strange]**
We're kind of difficult to understand sometimes.
Why should we have hope...
In the face of such difficult things.

We are weird... to the world around us.
People who don't believe in God... look at us...
And they say... why... why do you Hope?

Why do you believe in a Big Sky Daddy...
Who grants your wishes.
That's what someone posted...
On social media this week.

About how naive it is...
That "you" Christians...
Believe in a Big Sky Daddy...

But... the world has other questions... for us too.
Big theological questions like...
How could Jesus be...
Both fully God and fully human?
That doesn't make sense.

And more practical questions...
Like if God is good...
Then why do bad things happen?

Why is there war?
Why is there disease?
Why is there suffering?
Why do good people die?
Why do I feel pain in my heart?

And you know...
If you live long enough...
And if you experience enough...
Pain and sorrow... and joy and love...

You start to form answers...
To a lot of those questions...

And when those questions... rub us the wrong way...
We react defensively...
Well... let me tell YOU...
What I think. **[6 Argument]**

And see... there's the problem...
It's tempting to get into arguments...
About theology.

It's tempting to spin our theological wheels...
To spew out venom...
About what we think... the answers are...

It's tempting to be the person...
Who defends God's honor...

It's tempting to eliminate...
Any criticism...
About what we believe...
And how we choose to live...

It's tempting... but...

I don't think...
We are ever going to argue...
Someone who doesn't believe in God...
Into submission...
To our way of thinking.

And I don't think...
God really needs us...
To defend God's honor...

And I don't think...
That's what we are called to do.

Listen... I only want to focus on one verse...
Of all the scripture we read today.
One verse... 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 15ish... **[7 1 Peter 3]**

Always be ready... to make your defense...
To anyone who demands from you... an accounting...
For the hope... that is in you...
Yet do it with gentleness and respect.

See. Peter is calling us...
Not to argue others into submission.
Not to go into endless theological babbling.
Not to beat down others... to justify our faith.

Peter is assuming that there is hope...
That lives inside of you.
That's where he starts...

There is a hope...
That has been planted... in your heart...
Because of your faith in Jesus.

YOU HAVE HOPE.

And that hope is sustained...
By the Holy Spirit...
Who lives with you...
And in fact...
Will continue to be in you.
According to Jesus.
In the gospel lesson today.

So that's the starting point. **[8 Hope]**
There is a hope inside of you.
And there is a reason for that hope.

The funny thing is...
I can't tell you... why there is hope...
Living inside of you. That's your story.

Maybe... one day... you quietly prayed...
And asked God to help you believe...
And your heart was strangely warmed.

Maybe you had a strong witness in your life...
A mother... a father... a grandparent... a friend...

Who lived the faith so authentically...
That you wanted what they had...
And it got inside of you too.

Maybe you... are lucky... and...
Have experienced the power and the presence of God...
In a way... that changed your life... forever.

Maybe you have felt pain so deep...
That there was no way to get through...
You know there was no way...
You would have made it through...
Without hope in God.

Or maybe you lost someone...
You loved so much...
That you are hoping against hope...
That all the promises Jesus made...
Are holy... and true...

And so you believe... right now... that person...
Is living in the joy of the Kingdom of God...

See... I don't know.
I don't know... why you have hope.
Do you know your reason?

I mean... if I asked you today... to raise your hand...
Don't worry I'm not going to call on you...
But if I did... could you tell me...
Why you believe in Christ?

Can you give an accounting...
For that hope... living inside of you?

Have you thought about it?

Well... Peter invites us...
To not only think about it... but...
To be ready... to share your hope when other people ask.

But not in a way... that is contrary... to our faith.

Not in an argument.
Not out of anger.
Not out of a need to be right or smart...

Peter mentions two guardrails...
To help guide us...
When we share our faith.

The first is... gentleness.
But gentleness isn't about how we interact...
With other people...

This is about us... and our hearts...
Its about being humble... which makes us gentle. **[9 Humility]**

The nature of hope.
Understands... that we are not the source...
Of the hope that we have.

Our hope is in Christ ALONE.

I don't have to prove myself.
I don't have to be important.
I don't have to be right.
I don't have to win an argument.

In fact... if it's up to me...
Then there is no hope.
And that's not false humility...
It's the truth.

It's a recognition...
That the outcome...
Of this life...
Is not dependent on me.
And what I do.
And what I say.

Humility... points to the real source...
Of the hope that lives...
Within us.
It's God.
It's always God.

Therefore...
Hope counteracts the need...
To be important... or right...
Or any of that nonsense.

Hope faith and love... are completely dependent on God.

The second guardrail... that Peter mentions...
For sharing our faith is... RESPECT.
Which is a really bad interpretation...
Of a Greek word you already know... PHOBOS...
Phobia... FEAR.

When we share our faith... and our hope...
Peter calls us to do it in fear of God.
Now some people don't like that.

We want to pretend that God...
Is a big old heavenly puppy dog...
Who comes when we call...
And stays in our yard.

Sorry... that's not God.
That's something we created in our own image.

We need to fear God... **[10 Fear]**
In the same way we fear fire.

Fire is good.
We make camp fires.
We roast marshmallows...
And sing songs...
Sitting around a fire.

And yet... a fire outside of the fire ring...
Outside of containment...
A fire out of control...
Is scary.

Because within the fire...
Is great power... to change things.
Power changes things.

Therefore...
We respect fire.
We respect power tools.
We respect the breaking of the atom.

Well...
God is more powerful than these things.
God is the most powerful.
God is the one who speaks.
And atoms comes together...
Or atoms blow apart.

God... is the source...
Of all power.

So... when we talk about...
Our faith and our hope...
We need to remember...
That God is the one...
Who has the power to back up...
The hope... that we have.

If God didn't have that power...
It would be like writing checks...
From an empty bank account.
You have to be able to back up the promises.
Only God can.

Well... that's it. You know. **[11 Hope]**
Life is hard sometimes.
And it can all seem... a little hopeless.

But I just want you all to know...

You have more inside of you...
Than just you.

When you come to the end of yourself...
When you can't do anything to help yourself.
You have hope...
That there is more.. to this life... than just you.

You have the Holy Spirit.
Living inside of you.
To give you strength.

You have Jesus...
Who has made bold promises... to you...
That go beyond this life.

And don't forget...
You have a God...
Who is powerful... yes...
But who has also... miraculously...
Loved you... more than you can ever know.

And not just you.
But God has gone... to a whole lot of trouble...
To love this whole world. All people.

So... it's our turn now...
It's our mission.
It's our honor.
To tell the story.
To tell our individual faith stories...

And the reason we need to be ready...

Is so others can hear from us...
All about our loving God.
About the grace that we have been given...
About the hope that lives in us..

So they can be filled...
With hope too.

Thanks be to God.
Amen!